

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEL AV 07068 01 OF 02 021757Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----054004 021801Z /53
O 021725Z JUN 78 ZFF6
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3439
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 7068

EXDIS -- DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SAUNDERS AND ATHERTON FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PBOR, IS, US, EG
SUBJECT: DAYAN'S REMARKS ON PEACE PROCESS AND PROSPECTS FOR ISRAELI
CABINET RESPONSES TO US QUESTIONS

REF: A) STATE 135940, B) TEL AVIV 6541

1. DAYAN HAS REMAINED IN SECLUSION THIS WEEK, SUPPOSEDLY
NURSING A BAD COLD BUT REPORTEDLY DEVOTING HIMSELF FULL
TIME TO DEVELOPING PROPOSED RESPONSES TO OUR QUESTIONS TO
PUT BEFORE THE CABINET ON SUNDAY. PRESS IS FULL OF ALL SORTS
OF VERSIONS OF HIS IDEAS. HE MET WITH BEGIN YESTERDAY
AFTERNOON (JUNE 1) TO COORDINATE STRATEGY.
AS DISCUSSED IN VIETS-SAUNDERS TELCON LAST WEEKEND,
I AM CONVINCED IT IS IMPORTANT TO LET SITUATION FERMENT
WITHOUT FURTHER OBVIOUS INTRUSIONS ON MY PART, AND DAYAN
HAS SAID NOTHING FURTHER PUBLICLY SINCE HIS STATEMENTS IN
THE KNESSET DEBATE ON MAY 25.

2. I TOOK OPPORTUNITY OF LUNCH YESTERDAY WITH EVRON TO
MAKE CERTAIN THAT PRECISE NATURE OF INFORMATION I CONVEYED
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SECRET

PAGE 02 TEL AV 07068 01 OF 02 021757Z

TO DAYAN ON MAY 19 (REF B) IS ACCURATELY UNDERSTOOD BY
GOI, DESPITE TENDENTIOUS AND INACCURATE VERSIONS WHICH
HAVE APPEARED IN PRESS SINCE THAT TIME. DURING CONVERSATION
I CONVEYED TO EVRON THE ESSENCE OF PARAGRAPHS 3, 4 AND 5
OF REF A, PLUS KEY PASSAGES FROM PARAGRAPH 2. HE ASSURED ME
HE WOULD REPORT ACCURATELY TO DAYAN. I THINK WE CAN NOW
BE CONFIDENT THAT DAYAN WILL NOT CHARACTERIZE INFORMATION

WE CONVEYED AS REPRESENTING DIRECT ANSWERS FROM SADAT, ALTHOUGH WE CAN BE UNDER NO ILLUSION THAT SUBSTANCE OF INFORMATION WILL BE WITHHELD FROM CABINET.

3. TOWARD END OF CONVERSATION I MADE A POINT OF GIVING EVRON MY OWN PERSONAL VIEW THAT IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY UNFORTUNATE WERE THE CABINET'S RESPONSES TO OUR QUESTIONS TO BE OF A TEMPORIZING CHARACTER, OR TO BE IN THE NATURE OF MORE QUESTIONS AGAIN POSED TO US. I SAID I FRANKLY COULD NOT SEE THAT WE COULD GET ANYTHING MORE PRECISE ABOUT SADAT'S INTENTIONS FOR THE ISRAELIS UNLESS THE CABINET FACED UP SQUARELY TO THE TWO QUESTIONS WE HAD POSED TO THE GOI. MOREOVER, I SAID THAT I FEARED ANY OTHER TYPE OF RESPONSE WOULD HAVE THE UNFORTUNATE EFFECT OF CREATING AN IMPRESSION IN WASHINGTON THAT THE GOI WAS TRYING MERELY TO STRING OUT THE PROCESS TO AVOID COMING TO GRIPS WITH BASIC ISSUES. ALTHOUGH WE HAD MADE CLEAR WE DID NOT ENDORSE THE CONCEPT OF SETTING ARTIFICIAL DEADLINES FOR NEGOTIATIONS, EVENTS THEMSELVES WERE MOVING INEXORABLY TO PRODUCE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE FOR THE US TO AVERT DANGEROUS STALEMATE. EVRON GOT MY POINT, AND IMMEDIATELY AFTER LUNCH TELEPHONED DAYAN TO UNDERSCORE IT FOR HIM JUST BEFORE HE WAS TO MEET WITH BEGIN.

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 07068 02 OF 02 021802Z
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 7068

EXDIS -- DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS

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4. ALTHOUGH BEGIN REMAINS AT HOME RECUPERATING FROM HIS ILLNESS, ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO CHAIR THE CABINET ON SUNDAY. EVRON THINKS MORE THAN

ONE CABINET MEETING WILL BE REQUIRED FOR THIS IMPORTANT DEBATE, CONFIRMING OTHER SIMILAR REPORTS IN THE PRESS. THIS MEANS THAT IT MAY BE SUNDAY, JUNE 11 BEFORE THE OUTCOME IS CLEAR.

5. AT THIS POINT THE PROSPECT IS FOR A LENGTHY AND SERIOUS DEBATE IN THE CABINET, EVEN IF BEGIN AND DAYAN HAVE AGREED ON A WELL-COORDINATED STRATEGY TO ASSURE A CABINET CONSENSUS. DAYAN WILL NOT TAKE ON BEGIN DIRECTLY IN THE CABINET EVEN THOUGH WE HEAR THAT DAYAN WOULD LIKE TO GIVE US DETAILED ANSWERS. BUT THE DMC MINISTERS IN PARTICULAR WILL BE DRIVEN BY THEIR CONSTITUENCY TO EXPLORE DAYAN'S PROPOSALS IN DETAIL--AND SOME OTHER MINISTERS ARE LIKELY TO JOIN THE FRAY. WEIZMAN IS ALSO SIGNALLING TO READINESS TO BE FORTHCOMING TO WASHINGTON, BUT HE WILL BE CHARY OF SPLITTING OPENLY WITH BEGIN IN FRONT OF THE CABINET. EHRLICH AND THE LIBERALS ARE LIKELY TO STICK CLOSELY TO BEGIN, AND THE REST OF THE
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PAGE 02 TEL AV 07068 02 OF 02 021802Z

COALITION IS IN VARIOUS STAGES OF UNEASINESS ABOUT THE CHOICES THEY ARE BEING ASKED TO CONFRONT. THE KEY TO THE OUTCOME DEPENDS, I BELIEVE, ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH DAYAN HAS CONVINCED BEGIN THAT PROCRASTINATION IS DANGEROUS. THERE ARE SOME HINTS THAT DAYAN MAY HAVE BEEN FAIRLY PERSUASIVE ON THIS POINT.

6. WE CANNOT EXPECT FLAT POSITIVE RESPONSES UNDER THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES. I THINK WE ARE UNLIKELY TO GET FLAT NEGATIVES EITHER. WHAT IS MOST PROBABLE IS SOMETHING AMBIGUOUS, COMBINED WITH SOME ELABORATION OF BEGIN'S SLEF RULE PLAN INTENDED TO MAKE THE AMBIGUITY MORE PALATABLE TO US IF NOT TO SADAT. INCREASINGLY THE ISRAELI LEADERS ARE COMING TO REALIZE THAT THEY ARE FACING A MOMENT OF TRUTH. UNFORTUNATELY, AS HAS HAPPENED BEFORE IN THE TORTURED HISTORY OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT SINCE 1967, THEY FACE THIS MOMENT INTERNALLY DIVIDED, UNSURE OF THEIR STRATEGY, EMOTIONALLY RESENTFUL ABOUT THE U.S. ROLE, DISTRACTED BY IRRELEVANCIES IN THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SCENE, AND LED BY A PRIME MINISTER WHO IS CONVINCED OF THE RIGHTNESS OF HIS OWN PATH AND A POWERFUL POLITICAL ANTAGONIST WHEN CORNERED, EVEN IF SOMEWHAT WEAKENED PHYSICALLY.

7. WOULD THAT I COULD BE MORE OPTIMISTIC.
LEWIS

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